MONSTRESS
image
ISSUE 24
WINNER OF FIVE 2018 EISNER AWARDS
MARJORIE LIU
SANA TAKEDA

THE MONSTRESS STORY SO FAR...

During her search for Kippa, Maika Halfwolf was abducted by members of the clandestine Blood Court, a war-ready group led by a man known as the Lord Doctor. He is the last eye-marked descendant of the Shaman-Empress — and Maika's biological father. After surgically attaching a prosthetic arm to Maika's body without her consent, the Lord Doctor tried to convince Maika to join his cause, find out more about her childhood, and learn from her father's wealth of experience as Zinn's former host. But Maika would not agree to stand by the side of a man whose crimes include torturous experimentation on the Inquisitrix Gull and a series of cannibalistic murders that have earned him the nickname "The Ghoul Killer."

Maika teamed up with the enigmatic Vihn, Royal Engineer of Pontus, to rescue Gull and slip away from her father's clutches. After a brief battle, however, her father played his final card, using his unique knowledge to summon Zinn from Maika's body. Zinn was left catatonic with shock, and Maika, though free, has found herself once again unmoored.

THE PLAYERS...

MAIKA An Arcanic teen who survived the Great War, and slavery at the hands of the Cumaean witch nuns. Ruthless and haunted, she is determined to uncover the truth behind her mother's murder — and her mother's secrets — in the hope that she can free herself from an ancient and dangerous god called a Monstrum that is imprisoned inside her body and fills her with an otherworldly hunger for human flesh.

ZINN A mysterious, primordial Monstrum of tremendous power that shares Maika's body and mind, and fights her for control. Once considered a god, and drawn into this world by the Shaman-Empress, this Monstrum is driven by a deadly hunger, consuming the lives of humans and Arcanics alike, leaving only their desiccated corpses behind. Though it may give the impression that its only wish is to survive, there's far more to this creature, and its desires, than meets the eye…

KIPPA An Arcanic fox girl saved from slavery by Maika. Innocent and optimistic, she is frightened by the Monstrum — but trusts Maika and will bravely defend her and others by rushing into battles too dangerous for a child.

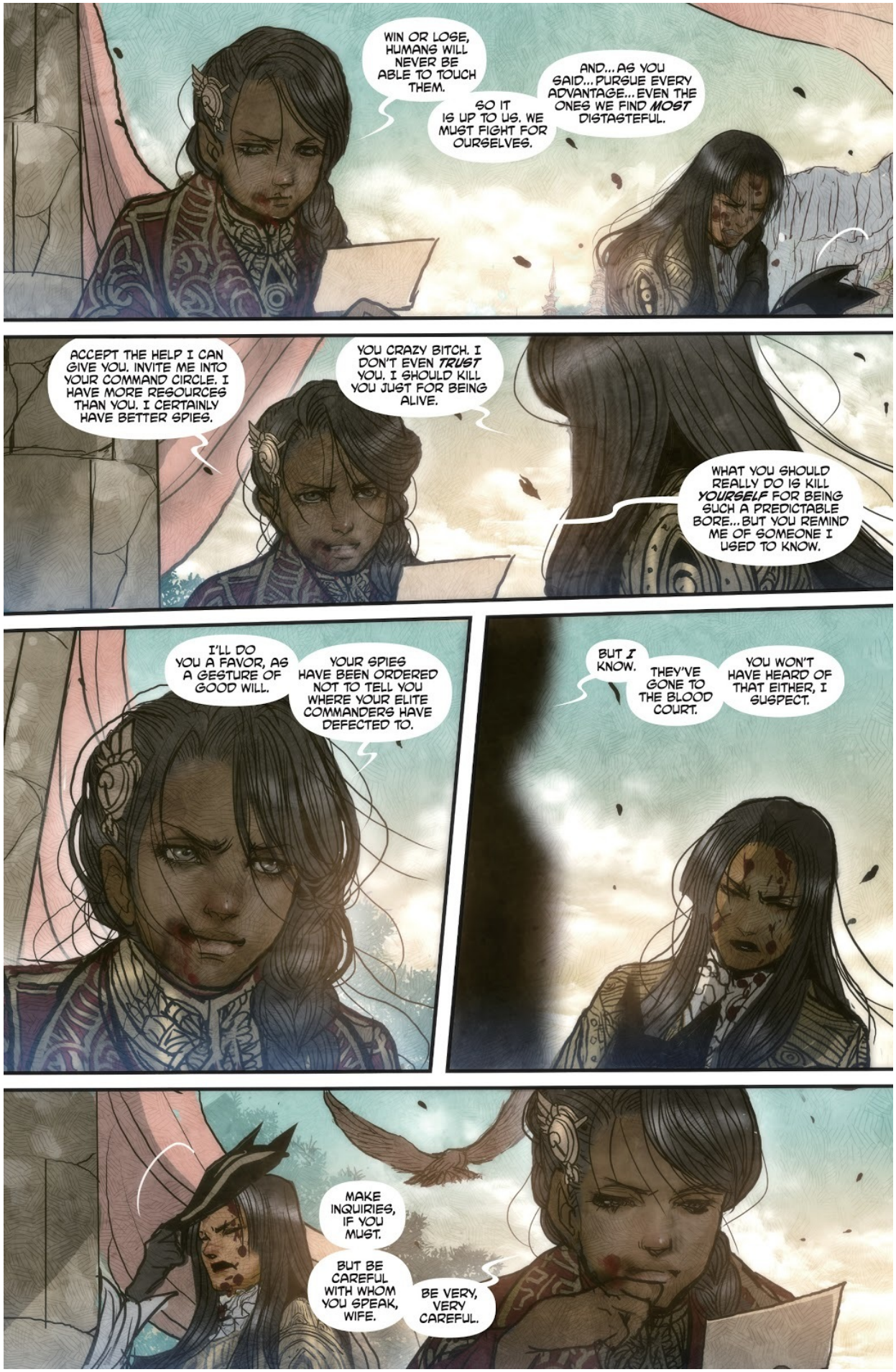
REN An enigmatic nekomancer cat with mysterious motives, he is one of Maika's companions on her journey, and perhaps an agent of the Dusk Court — or some greater power.

WARLORD The Dawn Court's "Sword of the East," twin sister of Moriko Halfwolf, and Maika's aunt. Ruthless in her ambition, the Warlord's greatest desire is to unravel the mystery behind the destruction of Constantine. She believes the secrets of Constantine will protect the Arcanics in their impending war against the humans — but she does not realize that the answers she seeks lie within her young niece.

TUYA Maika's closest friend in the world, who has been with her since before the Battle of Constantine. Unbeknownst to Maika, she is also the Baroness of the Last Dusk, a high-level member of the Arcanic Dusk Court tasked with containing — or even destroying — Maika's power.

THIS IS THE ARCANIC.
TAKE WHAT'S LEFT OF THE GREY RIDERS, ACTIVATE YOUR MOST ELITE TRACKERS... AND BRING ME MAIKA HALFWOLF. ALIVE. NO EXCEPTIONS.
MY WARLORD...
WHAT OF THE REPORTS OUT OF PONTUS AND THYRIA? SHOULD WE NOT BE SENDING TROOPS TO REINFORCE --
I DON'T *GIVE A SHIT* ABOUT PONTUS OR OLD GODS, OR A MURDERED QUEEN.
WHAT I WANT IS THE HALFWOLF.
DEAREST WARLORD... YOU SHOULD NEVER REVEAL SUCH... *HEATED INTEREST...* IN ANYONE. IT IMPLIES A WEAKNESS.
I HAVE NO TIME FOR GAMES, WIFE. I MUST PURSUE EVERY ADVANTAGE.
AND WHAT ADVANTAGE WOULD THIS HALFWOLF GIVE YOU? SHE IS ONLY YOUR NIECE, I'VE HEARD.
IT'S NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS.
ISN'T IT? I DID NOT ENTER THIS MARRIAGE TO BE NOTHING BUT YOUR BEDMATE.
YOU WANT TROOPS. WEAPONS. IT'S ALL BEEN NEGOTIATED.
NO. THAT'S WHAT THE *DUSK COURT* WANTS.
I, THE BARONESS, WANT A *COMMAND*. I WANT MY OWN TROOPS.
SPECIFICALLY, *I WANT YOUR AIR FLEET.*

YOU... PERSONALLY... WANT MY FLEET?
THE FULL FLEET WOULD DO NICELY. BUT I'LL UNDERSTAND IF YOU ONLY GIVE ME COMMAND OVER HALF OF THEM.
YOU CERTAINLY NEED THE HELP. YOU'VE MANAGED TO KEEP IT A SECRET THUS FAR, BUT MY SPIES TELL ME YOUR TOP COMMANDERS HAVE ABANDONED YOU FOR SOME MYSTERIOUS --
SHUT. YOUR. HOLE.
HOW DARE YOU EVEN THINK TO ASK FOR MY SHIPS?
SMAK
THE BARONESS? YOU BELIEVE THAT TITLE MEANS ANYTHING HERE? YOU'RE A DUSK COURT PUPPET, A FRIPPERY USED BY A WEAK COURT FOR WEAK ENDS.
YOU ARE NO ONE.
AIIIEEE!!
SHHRIIIP
SKREEE!
SHRIIIP
YOU PLAY THE GREAT WARRIOR, BUT THE ONLY REASON ARCANICS AREN'T IN CHAINS IS BECAUSE OF CONSTANTINE.
YOU KNOW IT. SO DO THE ANCIENTS.
SNIFF
YOUR ARMY IS STILL RECOVERING FROM THE LAST WAR.
YOUR SPIES ARE CONTROLLED BY YOUR MOTHER, YOUR MOST VALUED WARRIORS HAVE ABANDONED YOU.
AND THE ANCIENTS WILL NEVER GIVE YOU THE SUPPORT YOU TRULY NEED.
THIS WAR WILL BE THE SAME AS THE LAST. OUR ELDERS WILL THROW ARCANIC BODIES UNDER THE BLADES AND BOMBS AND CHEMICALS OF THE FEDERATION WHILE THEY HIDE THEMSELVES IN PERFECT SAFETY.


WIN OR LOSE, HUMANS WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO TOUCH THEM.
SO IT IS UP TO US. WE MUST FIGHT FOR OURSELVES.
AND... AS YOU SAID... PURSUE EVERY ADVANTAGE... EVEN THE ONES WE FIND *MOST* DISTASTEFUL.
ACCEPT THE HELP I CAN GIVE YOU. INVITE ME INTO YOUR COMMAND CIRCLE. I HAVE MORE RESOURCES THAN YOU. I CERTAINLY HAVE BETTER SPIES.
YOU CRAZY BITCH. I DON'T EVEN *TRUST* YOU. I SHOULD KILL YOU JUST FOR BEING ALIVE.
WHAT YOU SHOULD REALLY DO IS KILL *YOURSELF* FOR BEING SUCH A PREDICTABLE BORE... BUT YOU REMIND ME OF SOMEONE I USED TO KNOW.
I'LL DO YOU A FAVOR, AS A GESTURE OF GOOD WILL.
YOUR SPIES HAVE BEEN ORDERED NOT TO TELL YOU WHERE YOUR ELITE COMMANDERS HAVE DEFECTED TO.
BUT *I* KNOW.
THEY'VE GONE TO THE BLOOD COURT.
YOU WON'T HAVE HEARD OF THAT EITHER, I SUSPECT.
MAKE INQUIRIES, IF YOU MUST.
BUT BE CAREFUL WITH WHOM YOU SPEAK, WIFE.
BE VERY, VERY CAREFUL.

LITTLE WOLF...
MOTHER?
THE OLD MAN...
...I'D FORGOTTEN HIM. ERASED HIM, SO THAT I NEVER EVEN IMAGINED HIM. HE DIDN'T MATTER.
AND NOW I'VE MET HIM... AND HE TERRIFIES ME.
WHAT DID I TEACH YOU, DAUGHTER? FEAR IS EITHER A WEAPON OR IT IS USELESS.
REMEMBER: YOUR FATHER DOES NOT KNOW AS MUCH AS HE THINKS HE DOES.
ABOUT YOU...
...OR ZINN.
...BELOVED... BELOVED... IT IS A MISTAKE... I DID NOT... I WOULD NEVER...
...NEVER...
YOUR FUTURES ARE NOT WRITTEN.
BUT THEY *WILL* BE...
...EITHER TO GREAT BENEDICTION...

"...OR EVEN GREATER TRIBULATION."
UNNH...
...MOTHER...
:GASP: WHAT... WHAT HAPPENED?
YOU HAPPENED.
THE ANCIENT LEFT TO GO FETCH YOUR FRIENDS, AND SOLDIERS CAME UPON US. THEIR ONLY ORDERS WERE TO FIND YOU AND WAIT UPON YOUR WISHES.
YOUR WISHES WERE TO FEED.
I SHARED IN THE BOUNTY.
HE KNEW THAT WOULD HAPPEN. HE KNEW...
WHAT A THOUGHTFUL FATHER.
NO... IT'S NOT TRUE...IT'S NOT--

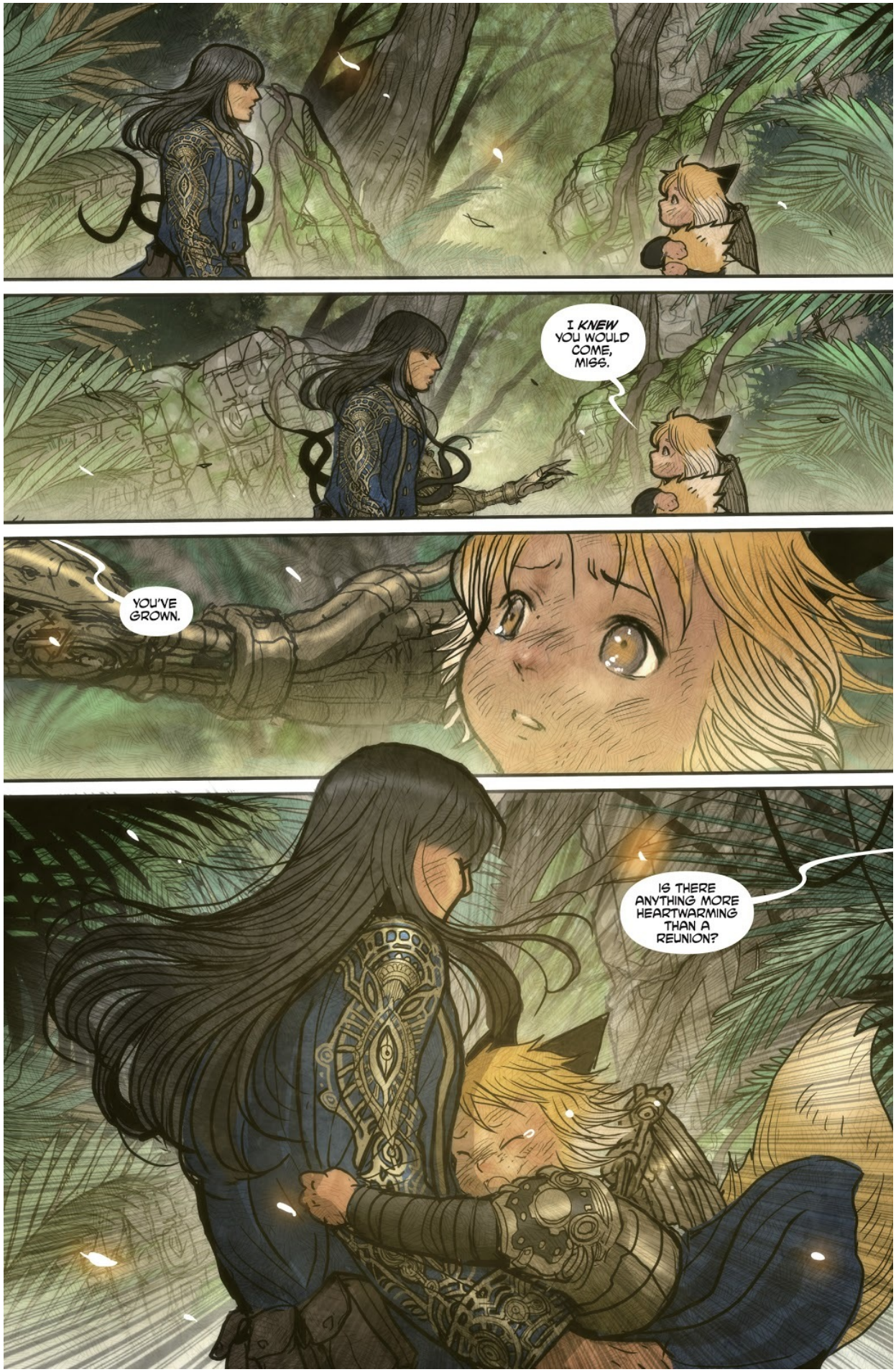
A WASTE.
HURRK
SHUT UP. OR BETTER YET, KILL ME.
ZINN SEEMS TO BE OUT OF HIS MIND... AND I DON'T CARE ANYMORE.
YOU CARE.
ENOUGH TO SAVE ME, TWICE. AND FOR THAT I OWE YOU A LIFE... PERHAPS MORE.
YOU WILL NOT DIE BY MY HAND, MAIKA HALFWOLF.
BUT YOU WON'T HELP ME AGAINST YOUR KIND, WILL YOU? AT LEAST TELL ME HOW MANY OF YOU THERE ARE.
THE MOTHER SUPERIOR STILL LIVES, DESPITE YOUR BEST EFFORTS.
AND THERE ARE TWO OTHERS.
YOU'RE RIGHT. I'M NOT SO DISLOYAL AS TO SHARE OUR PLANS... BUT YOUR ODDS ARE... LONG.
NOT SIMPLY BECAUSE OF MY KIND, EITHER.
YOUR FATHER, HALFWOLF.
I FEAR YOU MORE FOR KNOWING WHAT MADE YOU.
HE DIDN'T MAKE ME. MY MOTHER DID.
AND I ALWAYS BET ON HER.
WHY ARE YOU STILL HERE, ANYWAY?
GO HOME TO THE REST OF YOUR KIND, AND YOUR PLANS TO KILL US ALL. GOOD FUCKING LUCK.
SAVE YOUR LUCK.

MMPH!
ZINN...
...ARE YOU HURT?
...TALK TO ME...
SNFF
SNFF

WHEN THE OLD MAN SAID THAT NAME...
THE TRUTH ISN'T THAT TERRIBLE, IS IT?
YOU WILL MAKE THE SAME MISTAKE AGAIN IF YOU --
THOUGH I'M DISAPPOINTED YOU WORKED SO HARD TO FORGET ME, ZINN. WE'LL HAVE TO FIX THAT, WON'T WE?
SHHKKK
ZINN!
WHAT'S WRONG? WHY AREN'T YOU SPEAKING?
WE'RE BOTH FUCKED, OKAY?
OKAY?

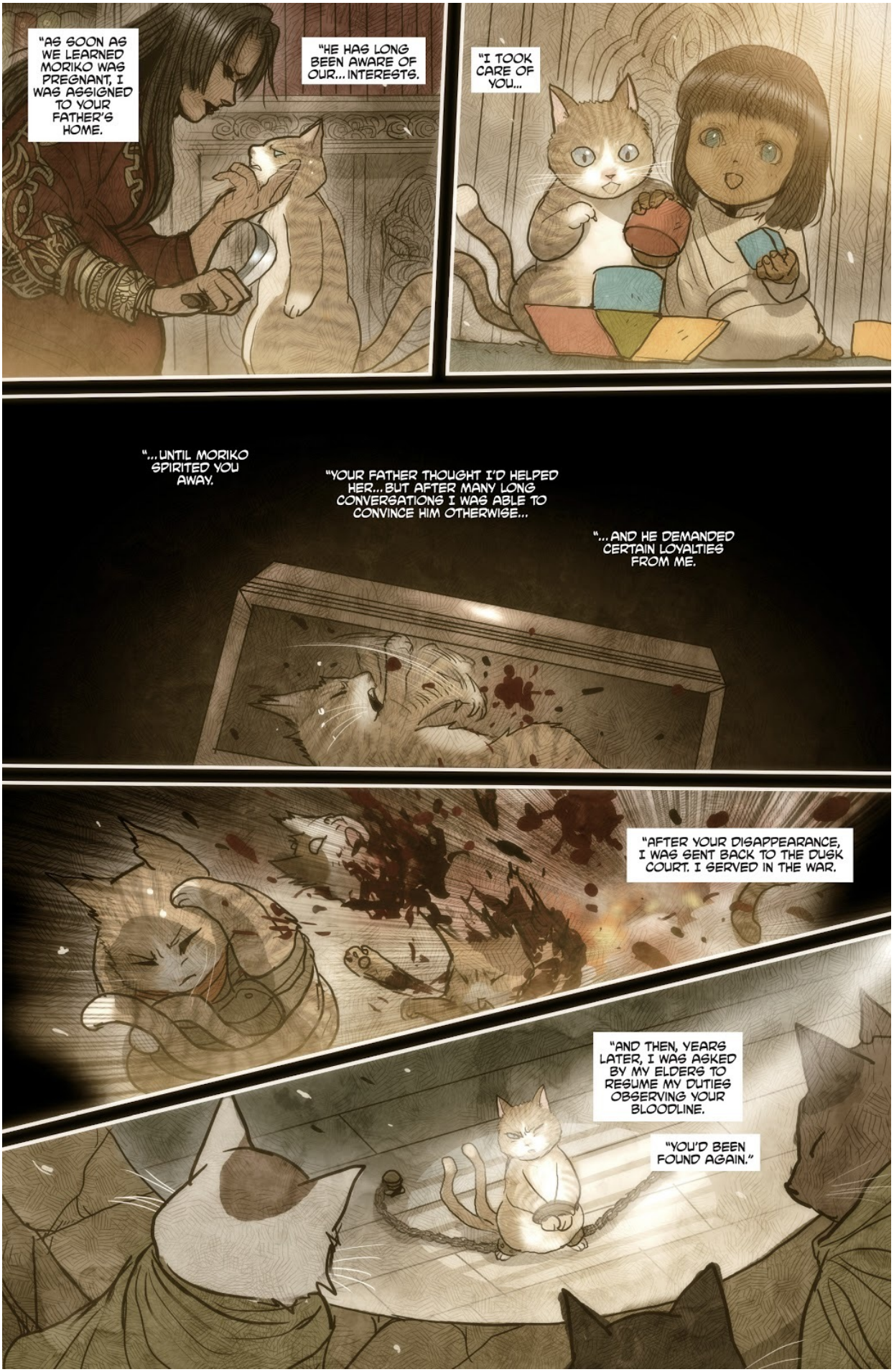
THE SECOND OF STARS, REPORTING. ARE YOU RECEIVING?
FIRST OF STARS RECEIVES. WHAT OF YOUR MISSION?
THE BOON WAS DELIVERED. YOU HAVE NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT.
I DO NOT WORRY, DAUGHTER.
I MASTER.
I TAKE IT, THEN, MY SISTER SHOWED HERSELF?
SHE DID. SHE IS A MOST SUBTLE STUDY.
YOU SHOULD HAVE KILLED HER, FATHER. SHE'S TOO DANGEROUS. I COULD TRACK HER --
SOFTLY, DAUGHTER.
I HAVE LEARNED MUCH ABOUT HER THAT WE DID NOT KNOW BEFORE.
MUCH THAT WAS HIDDEN EVEN FROM THE ANCIENT LOREMASTERS IS NOW PLAIN.
I WISH TO OBSERVE HER A LITTLE LONGER. HER HUNGER IS GROWING...IT WILL SOON BECOME UNBEARABLE TO HER. GIVEN ENOUGH TIME, SHE MIGHT EVEN WILLINGLY GIVE US WHAT WE NEED.
AND IF SHE DOESN'T?
FATHER?

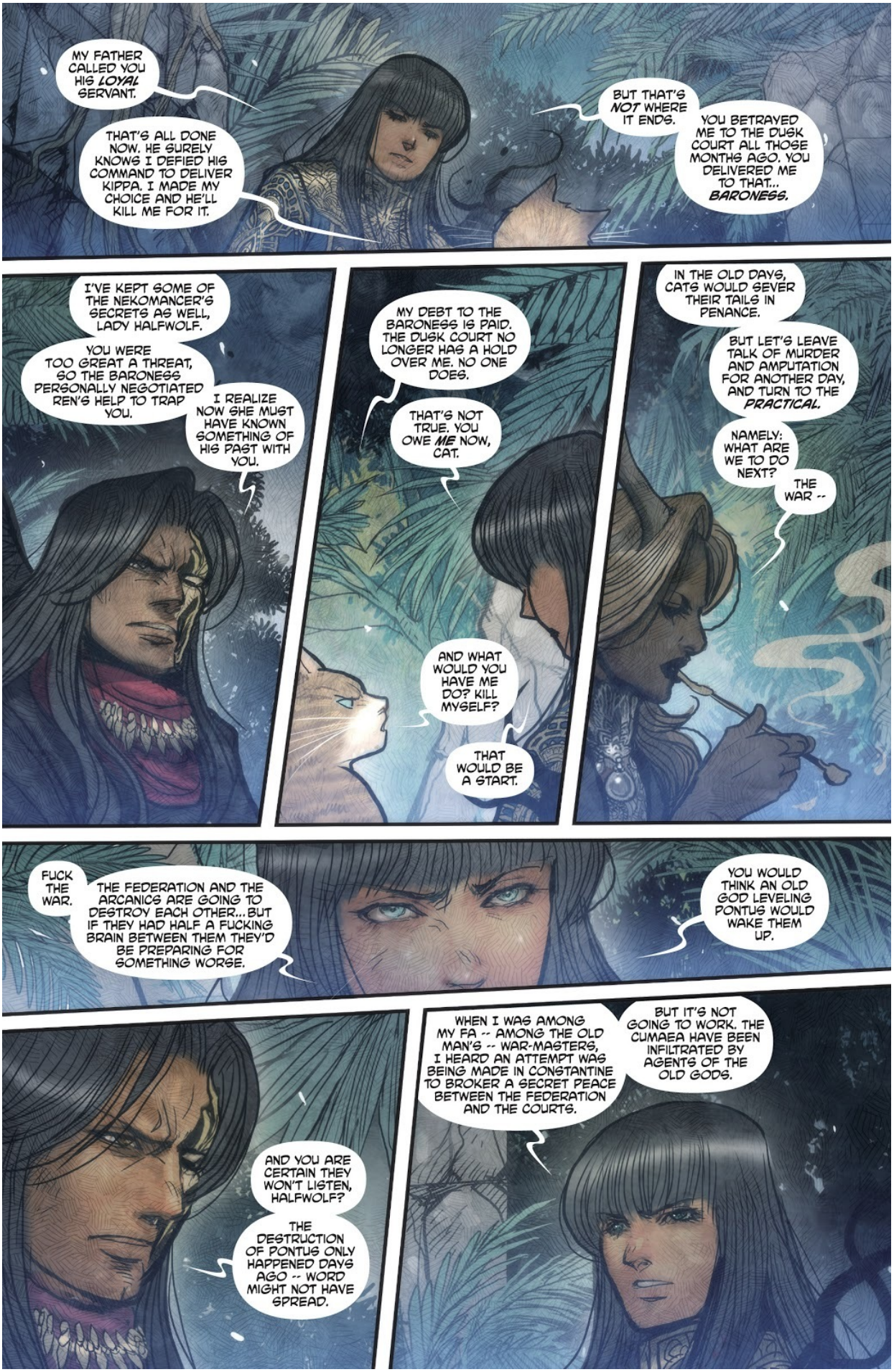
I KILLED. I ATE. I REMEMBER NOTHING...
...EXCEPT THE TASTE...
THE OLD MAN WAS RIGHT ABOUT ONE THING. I CAN'T KEEP RUNNING FROM MY HUNGER. I JUST DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO.
WHAT AM I LIVING FOR IF I EAT PEOPLE TO SURVIVE...

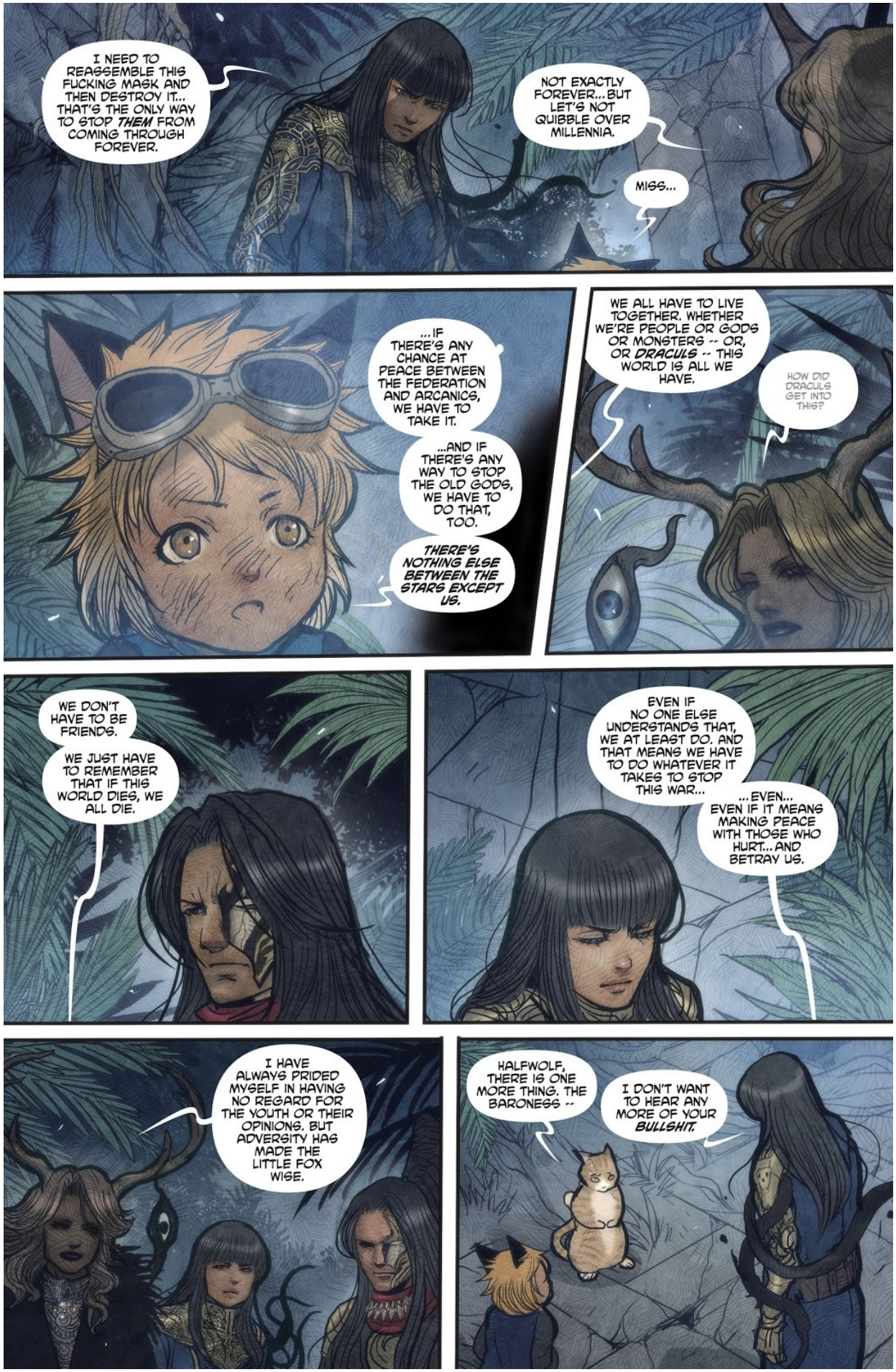

I KNEW YOU WOULD COME, MISS.
YOU'VE GROWN.
IS THERE ANYTHING MORE HEARTWARMING THAN A REUNION?

BUT I ADVISE WE CONVEY OURSELVES AS FAR FROM HERE AS POSSIBLE -- AND QUICKLY.
YOUR FATHER'S HOSPITALITY HAS ITS LIMITS, MAIKA HALFWOLF.
MY TRUST HAS ITS LIMITS TOO, VIHN...OR WHOEVER YOU ARE.
AND CORVIN... WHAT THE FUCK HAPPENED?
YOUR *FATHER* HAPPENED. FORTUNATELY, I'M NOT SO EASY TO MURDER.
YOU CAT BASTARD!
I'M GONNA KILL YOU!
LADY HALFWOLF!
MISS! NO!
...BREAK EVERY BONE IN YOUR TAILS...
WELL, THAT WAS ELEVATING, YES?
SHALL WE MOVE ALONG?

MASTER REN... WHY DID YOU DO IT?
BECAUSE HE'S A FUCKING TRAITOR!
MISS... YOU SHOULD LET HIM TALK.
HE BETRAYED YOU, TOO.
BUT MASTER REN ALSO TRIED TO STOP THE ONES WHO TOOK ME. HE TRIED, MISS.
I CAN'T ABANDON PEOPLE BECAUSE THEY MAKE MISTAKES -- I WOULD HAVE TO ABANDON MYSELF.
EVEN BEFORE YOU WERE BORN, WE CATS WATCHED THE SHAMAN-EMPRESS'S BLOODLINE... AND YOUR MOTHER.
SOME OF UBASTI'S PROPHETS BELIEVED MORIKO HALFWOLF HAD THE POWER TO CHANGE THE WORLD.
THERE WAS QUITE THE STIR WHEN THOSE TWO INTERESTS MERGED... IN HER PREGNANCY.


"AS SOON AS WE LEARNED MORIKO WAS PREGNANT, I WAS ASSIGNED TO YOUR FATHER'S HOME.
"HE HAS LONG BEEN AWARE OF OUR... INTERESTS.
"I TOOK CARE OF YOU...
"...UNTIL MORIKO SPIRITED YOU AWAY.
"YOUR FATHER THOUGHT I'D HELPED HER... BUT AFTER MANY LONG CONVERSATIONS I WAS ABLE TO CONVINCE HIM OTHERWISE...
"...AND HE DEMANDED CERTAIN LOYALTIES FROM ME.
"AFTER YOUR DISAPPEARANCE, I WAS SENT BACK TO THE DUSK COURT. I SERVED IN THE WAR.
"AND THEN, YEARS LATER, I WAS ASKED BY MY ELDERS TO RESUME MY DUTIES OBSERVING YOUR BLOODLINE.
"YOU'D BEEN FOUND AGAIN."


MY FATHER CALLED YOU HIS *LOYAL* SERVANT.
THAT'S ALL DONE NOW. HE SURELY KNOWS I DEFIED HIS COMMAND TO DELIVER KIPPA. I MADE MY CHOICE AND HE'LL KILL ME FOR IT.
BUT THAT'S *NOT* WHERE IT ENDS.
YOU BETRAYED ME TO THE DUSK COURT ALL THOSE MONTHS AGO. YOU DELIVERED ME TO THAT... *BARONESS.*
I'VE KEPT SOME OF THE NEKOMANCER'S SECRETS AS WELL, LADY HALFWOLF.
YOU WERE TOO GREAT A THREAT, SO THE BARONESS PERSONALLY NEGOTIATED REN'S HELP TO TRAP YOU.
I REALIZE NOW SHE MUST HAVE KNOWN SOMETHING OF HIS PAST WITH YOU.
MY DEBT TO THE BARONESS IS PAID. THE DUSK COURT NO LONGER HAS A HOLD OVER ME. NO ONE DOES.
THAT'S NOT TRUE. YOU OWE *ME* NOW, CAT.
AND WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE ME DO? KILL MYSELF?
THAT WOULD BE A START.
IN THE OLD DAYS, CATS WOULD SEVER THEIR TAILS IN PENANCE.
BUT LET'S LEAVE TALK OF MURDER AND AMPUTATION FOR ANOTHER DAY, AND TURN TO THE *PRACTICAL.*
NAMELY: WHAT ARE WE TO DO NEXT?
THE WAR --
FUCK THE WAR.
THE FEDERATION AND THE ARCANICS ARE GOING TO DESTROY EACH OTHER... BUT IF THEY HAD HALF A FUCKING BRAIN BETWEEN THEM THEY'D BE PREPARING FOR SOMETHING WORSE.
YOU WOULD THINK AN OLD GOD LEVELING PONTUS WOULD WAKE THEM UP.
AND YOU ARE CERTAIN THEY WON'T LISTEN, HALFWOLF?
THE DESTRUCTION OF PONTUS ONLY HAPPENED DAYS AGO -- WORD MIGHT NOT HAVE SPREAD.
WHEN I WAS AMONG MY FA -- AMONG THE OLD MAN'S -- WAR-MASTERS, I HEARD AN ATTEMPT WAS BEING MADE IN CONSTANTINE TO BROKER A SECRET PEACE BETWEEN THE FEDERATION AND THE COURTS.
BUT IT'S NOT GOING TO WORK. THE CUMAEA HAVE BEEN INFILTRATED BY AGENTS OF THE OLD GODS.


I NEED TO REASSEMBLE THIS FUCKING MASK AND THEN DESTROY IT... THAT'S THE ONLY WAY TO STOP *THEM* FROM COMING THROUGH FOREVER.
NOT EXACTLY FOREVER... BUT LET'S NOT QUIBBLE OVER MILLENNIA.
MISS...
...IF THERE'S ANY CHANCE AT PEACE BETWEEN THE FEDERATION AND ARCANICS, WE HAVE TO TAKE IT.
...AND IF THERE'S ANY WAY TO STOP THE OLD GODS, WE HAVE TO DO THAT, TOO.
THERE'S NOTHING ELSE BETWEEN THE STARS EXCEPT US.
WE ALL HAVE TO LIVE TOGETHER. WHETHER WE'RE PEOPLE OR GODS OR MONSTERS -- OR, OR *DRACULS* -- THIS WORLD IS ALL WE HAVE.
HOW DID DRACULS GET INTO THIS?
WE DON'T HAVE TO BE FRIENDS.
WE JUST HAVE TO REMEMBER THAT IF THIS WORLD DIES, WE ALL DIE.
EVEN IF NO ONE ELSE UNDERSTANDS THAT, WE AT LEAST DO. AND THAT MEANS WE HAVE TO DO WHATEVER IT TAKES TO STOP THIS WAR...
...EVEN... EVEN IF IT MEANS MAKING PEACE WITH THOSE WHO HURT... AND BETRAY US.
I HAVE ALWAYS PRIDED MYSELF IN HAVING NO REGARD FOR THE YOUTH OR THEIR OPINIONS. BUT ADVERSITY HAS MADE THE LITTLE FOX WISE.
HALFWOLF, THERE IS ONE MORE THING. THE BARONESS --
I DON'T WANT TO HEAR ANY MORE OF YOUR *BULLSHIT.*

=HURK=
LITTLE FOX... YOUR EYES...
I'M... I'M GROWING UP, MISS. MY ARCANIC GIFTS ARE COMING TO ME.
I THINK... IT'S SOME KIND OF SIGHT.
WHAT DID YOU SEE JUST NOW?

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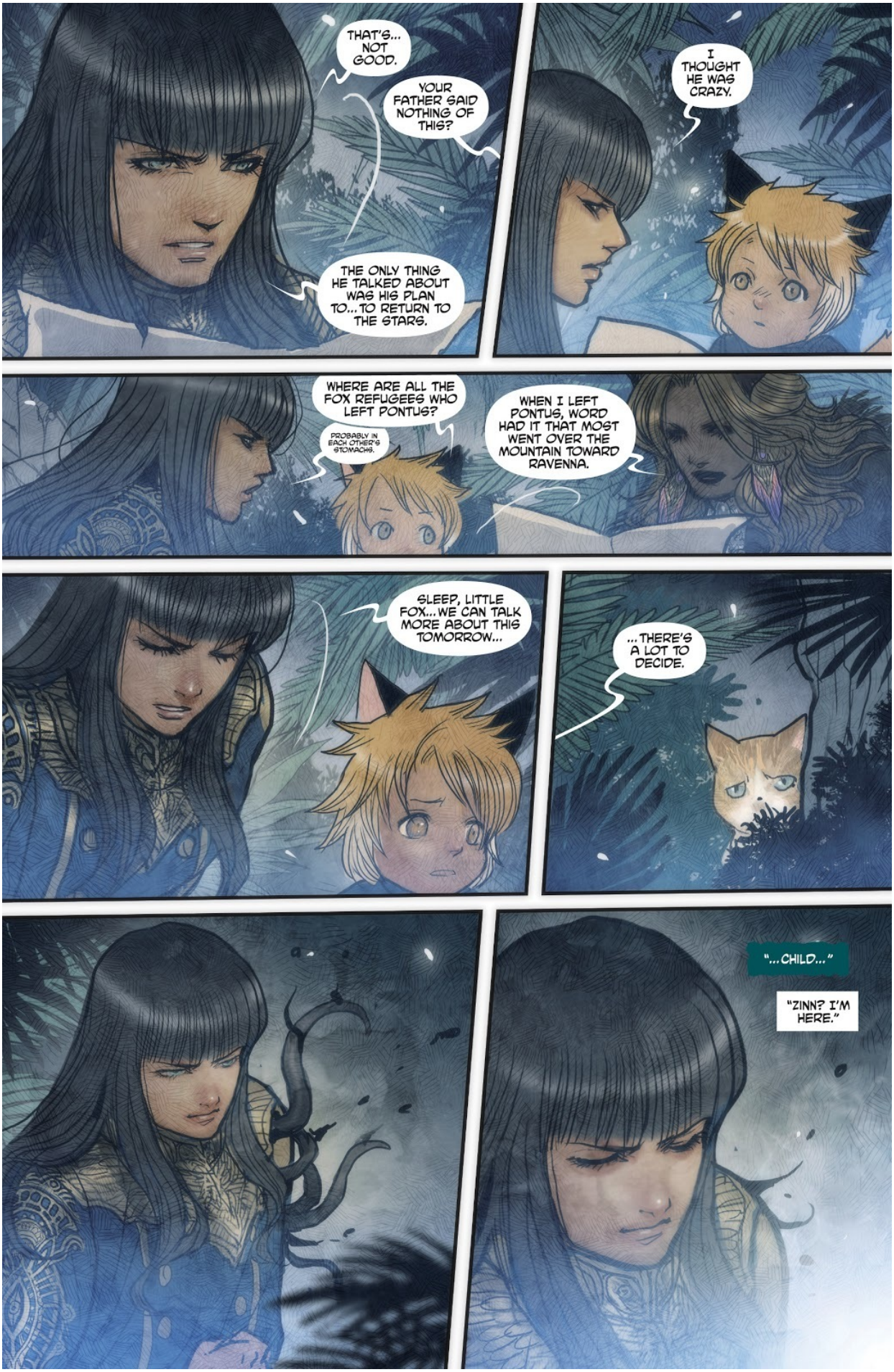
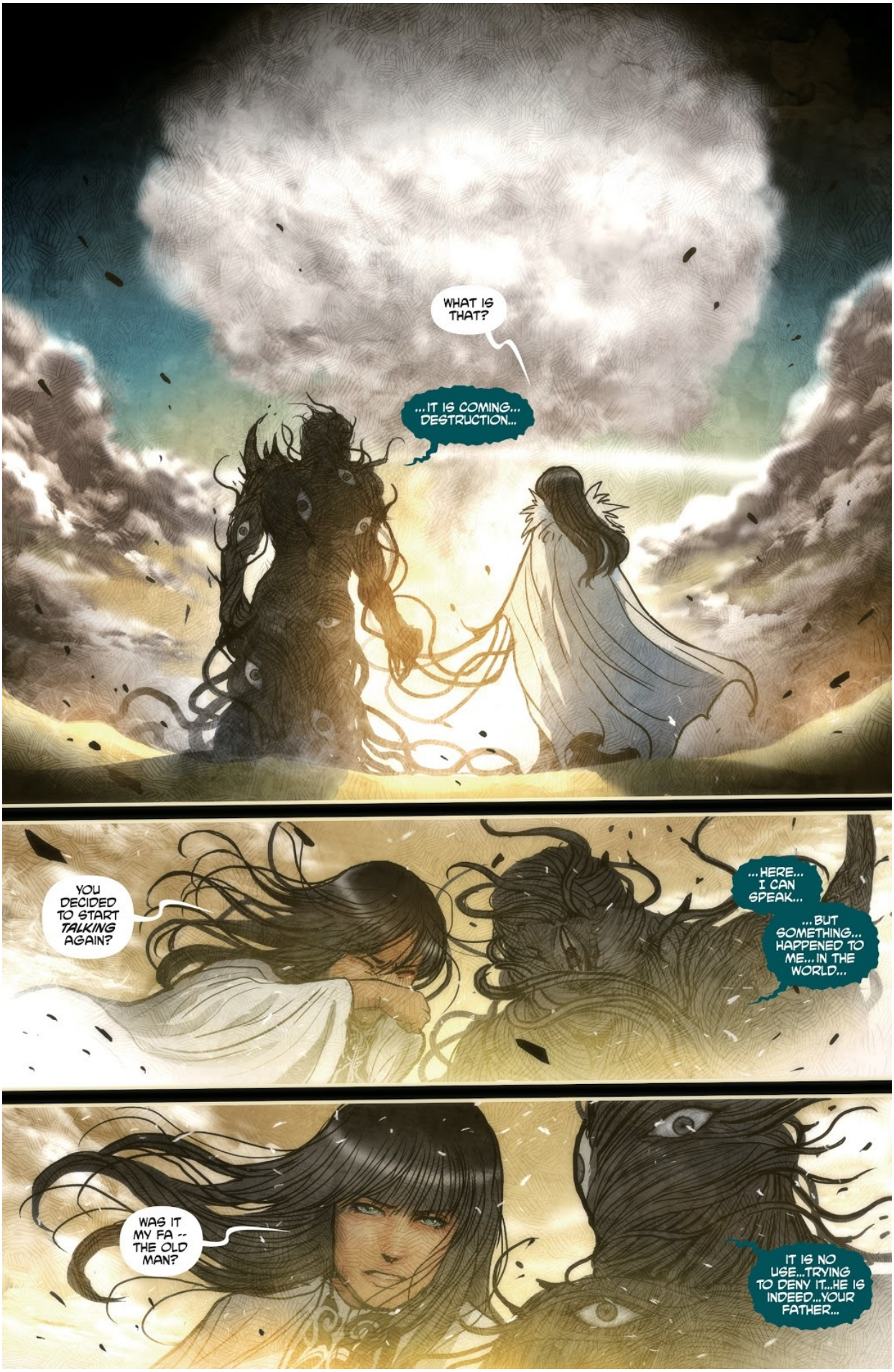
W-WHAT ARE YOU?
AN ANCIENT IN DISGUISE.
NO. SHE'S *MORE.* SHE HAS *STARS* UNDER HER SKIN. SHE'S...SHE'S NOT FROM THIS WORLD.
IF YOU CAN SEE THAT, CHILD, THEN YOU ARE *MORE* THAN SIMPLY GIFTED.
IN THE AGE OF MAGIC, THE FOXES POSSESSED GIFTS THAT EVEN THEIR ANCIENT PROGENITORS ENVIED.
PERHAPS ALL THESE MONTHS SPENT IN SUCH CLOSE PROXIMITY TO AN OLD GOD HAS AWAKENED THOSE OLDER POWERS.
PLEASE DON'T CHANGE THE SUBJECT, MISS VIHN. WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE WITH US?
I THOUGHT IT WAS OBVIOUS. I *WANT* SOMETHING FROM THE HALFWOLF. BUT THEN, SO DOES *EVERYONE.*
I DON'T WANT HER DEAD, THOUGH. I GIVE YOU MY WORD. SO PLEASE, BE AT EASE.
OH, *I'M* NOT. EVEN A LITTLE.
BOP
IN THE MEANTIME... OUR LORD OF ENDLESS SHADOWS APPEARS TO HAVE SUFFERED SOMETHING OF A BLOW. CONCERNING, NO?
ZINN WILL HAVE TO GET OVER IT.
WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN LOOKING AT?
PLANS I STOLE FROM YOUR FATHER'S LAB.
THIS LOOKS LIKE A WEAPON, MISS. A BIG ONE.
THE FOX IS RIGHT.
I SUSPECT HE WAS SIPHONING INFERNAL ENERGY FROM THE CAPTURED OLD GOD TO FUEL IT.


THAT'S... NOT GOOD.
YOUR FATHER SAID NOTHING OF THIS?
THE ONLY THING HE TALKED ABOUT WAS HIS PLAN TO... TO RETURN TO THE STARS.
I THOUGHT HE WAS CRAZY.
WHERE ARE ALL THE FOX REFUGEES WHO LEFT PONTUS?
PROBABLY IN EACH OTHER'S STOMACHS.
WHEN I LEFT PONTUS, WORD HAD IT THAT MOST WENT OVER THE MOUNTAIN TOWARD RAVENNA.
SLEEP, LITTLE FOX... WE CAN TALK MORE ABOUT THIS TOMORROW...
... THERE'S A LOT TO DECIDE.
"... CHILD..."
"ZINN? I'M HERE."


WHAT IS THAT?
...IT IS COMING... DESTRUCTION...
YOU DECIDED TO START *TALKING* AGAIN?
...HERE... I CAN SPEAK...
...BUT SOMETHING... HAPPENED TO ME... IN THE WORLD...
WAS IT MY FA -- THE OLD MAN?
IT IS NO USE...TRYING TO DENY IT...HE IS INDEED...YOUR FATHER...

...I WORE HIM...FOR LONG YEARS...WHILE I SLEPT...AND HE HAS LEARNED...WHAT I CAN BARELY...RECALL...
...HE HAS... UNTETHERED ME...
YOU NEED TO PULL IT TOGETHER, ZINN. SHIT IS ABOUT TO GET BAD.
WE'RE GOING TO NEED EACH OTHER IF WE'RE GOING TO GET THROUGH THIS.
GULL TOLD ME WHERE THE NEXT MASK FRAGMENT IS. SHOULD I BELIEVE HER?
...THEY WOULD NOT... LIE.
IT'S IN FEDERATION TERRITORY. WHICH IS A PROBLEM.
...IF MY SISTER-BROTHER... TOLD YOU WHERE... IT IS...THEN THE OTHERS...ALREADY HAVE IT...
...WHICH MEANS... YOU MUST NOT...FOR ANY REASON...WEAR THE FRAGMENTS...IN YOUR POSSESSION...
...IT WILL OPEN US...TO DANGER...
...AND THEY NEED...WHAT YOU HAVE...
...DO NOT...MAKE IT EASIER...FOR THEM...WITH A PIECE OF THE MASK...IN THEIR GRASP...THE DANGERS TO US... MULTIPLY... EXPONENTIALLY...
WE'RE ALREADY IN DANGER. I NEED THAT THIRD FRAGMENT.

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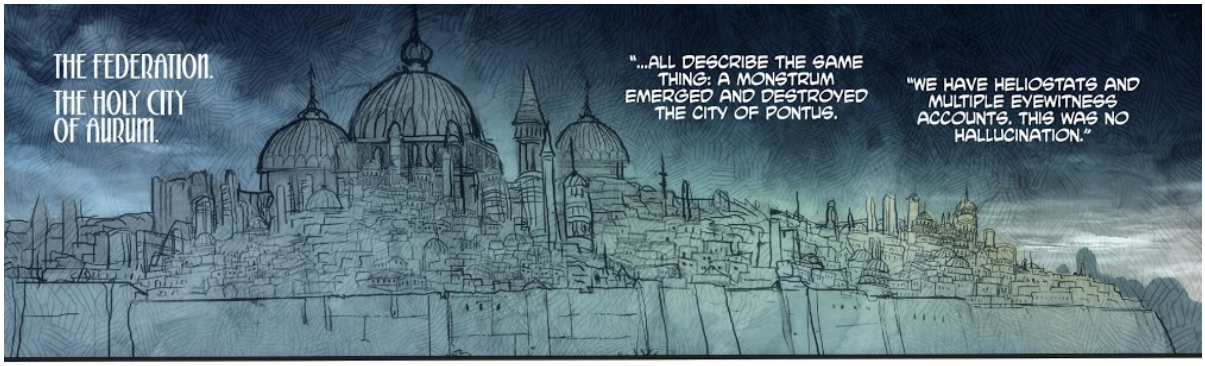
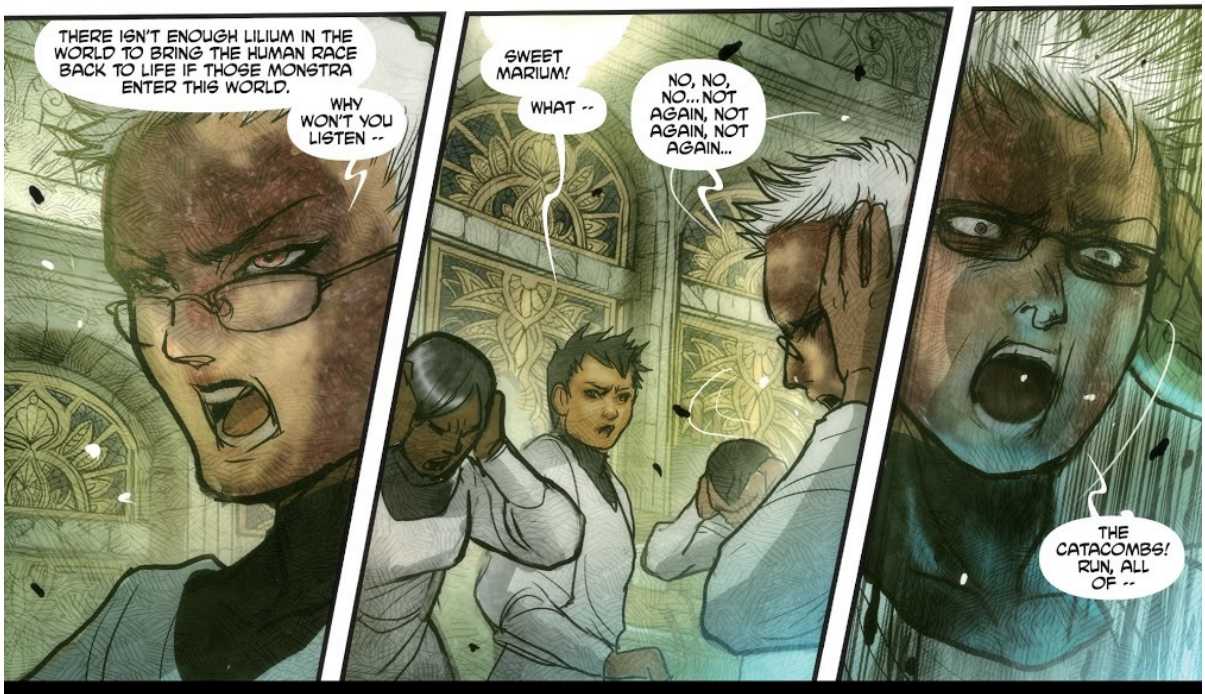

THE FEDERATION.
THE HOLY CITY OF AURUM.
"...ALL DESCRIBE THE SAME THING: A MONSTRUM EMERGED AND DESTROYED THE CITY OF PONTUS.
"WE HAVE HELIOSTATS AND MULTIPLE EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS. THIS WAS NO HALLUCINATION."

ALL THESE YEARS I'VE BEEN WARNING YOU ABOUT THE MONSTRA, THAT WHAT DESTROYED CONSTANTINE WAS NO MERE BOMB...
LADY SOPHIA --
THE MONSTRA ARE *NOT* HARMLESS APPARITIONS, AND THE ARCANICS *HAVE* MASTERED SOME CONTROL OVER THEM.
CLEARLY WHAT HAPPENED IN PONTUS WAS AN EXPERIMENT GONE WRONG, BUT IT SHOWS THEY PLAN TO UNLEASH THOSE DEMONS UPON THE FEDERATION.

LADY SOPHIA, YOU *WILL* BE SILENT ON THIS MATTER.
WE DID NOT COME HERE TO DISCUSS *FANTASTICAL RUMORS.*
ALL THAT MATTERS IS YOUR WORK ON THE RESURRECTION FORMULA.


THERE ISN'T ENOUGH LILIUM IN THE WORLD TO BRING THE HUMAN RACE BACK TO LIFE IF THOSE MONSTRA ENTER THIS WORLD.
WHY WON'T YOU LISTEN --
SWEET MARIUM!
WHAT --
NO, NO, NO... NOT AGAIN, NOT AGAIN, NOT AGAIN...
THE CATACOMBS! RUN, ALL OF --

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=GASP=
AIIIEEEE!
PRIME MINISTER! WE'VE LOST ALL COMMUNICATION WITH THE HOLY CITY OF AURUM!
OH, MARIUM, NO.
ATENA... TELL ME THAT ISN'T WHAT I THINK IT IS...
"IT'S THE WORST OF ALL OUR FEARS."

DAWN COURT.
DAYS LATER.
ARCANICS ARE BEING BLAMED FOR THE AURUM BOMB.
THE COURTS ARE BEING BLAMED, YOU MEAN.
AND THE COURT NOBLES ARE BLAMING YOU...THEY BELIEVE YOU ATTACKED WITHOUT PROVOCATION. THE ANCIENTS WILL CERTAINLY USE THIS AS AN EXCUSE TO DEMOTE YOU.
TOO BAD YOU DON'T HAVE ANY FRIENDS WITH DEEP INFLUENCE IN THE DUSK COURT.
YOU WERE RIGHT... ABOUT THIS BLOOD COURT.
NATURALLY.
WARLORD! WE HAVE INITIAL REPORTS FROM AURUM!

THE FEDERATION ARMY IS MOBILIZING. I WANT THE FLEET IN THE AIR IN AN HOUR.
YOU NEED TO DISEMBARK.
OH, YOU DIDN'T HEAR? I'M COMING WITH YOU.
I HAVE BUSINESS IN THE WEST.
WHAT BUSINESS?
I'M GOING TO NEGOTIATE A PEACE TREATY WITH THE FEDERATION.
PEACE? WE'RE FLYING TO WAR, YOU FOOL.
YOU WAGER ON WAR, I'LL WAGER ON PEACE. LET'S SEE WHO WINS, DEAR WIFE.
YOU'RE EVEN CRAZIER THAN I THOUGHT.
THIS IS TOO DANGEROUS. IF SHE DISCOVERS --
TANNO, YOU MUST FLY AHEAD OF ME. TAKE MY PERSONAL SWIFT.
FIND CORVIN. HE KNOWS WHAT TO DO.
TO BE CONTINUED...

MARJORIE LIU • SANA TAKEDA
MONSTRESS
BOOK ONE
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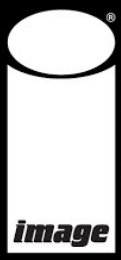

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